

A REFLECTION ON THE PHENOMENON OF BOKO HARAM AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

The incessant killings, kidnappings and destruction of properties caused by Boko Haram activities have turned out to be of great distress to Nigeria and international community. Boko Haram insurgency has negatively affected Nigerian economy and society especially, in the north-eastern part of the country where the activities of the insurgents are intense. This paper intends to examine some of the armed operations of Boko Haram in the north-eastern Nigeria, with a view to revealing the extent to which the operations thwarted Nigeria's socio-economic development. Similarly, the paper suggests how through creation of employment opportunities for the Nigerian teeming youths, resorting to dialogue, equipping and re-equipping of Nigeria's security agencies with modern technology and methods; can the issue of Boko Haram insurgency be best brought to an end in the country. Finally, the paper offers some pragmatic ways that if properly adopted can help avoid occurrence of another insurgent group in the country.

Keywords: Boko Haram, Insurgency, North-east, Military, and Bombings

1. Introduction

Independent regime was set on ground in Nigeria by the year 1999 after more than 16 years of military autocracy. The target of the general population was the coming of civilian government; dividends of democracy will spread to all nooks and crannies of Nigeria. Still, the hopes have been ruined by the recent events in Nigeria. Fifteen years after civilian rule, the country's security situation is pathetic that nobody in the country is safe from the attacks of terrorists, kidnappers, armed gangs and militants. Electoral and communal violence has also compounded the security situation that has made Nigeria unsafe for residence. The activities of the dreaded Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram have been a great concern to the Nigerian government and the international community, as in up to date; Boko Haram has killed more than 10,000 citizens despite the security measure taken by the federal government of Nigeria to checkmate the heinous crime of the sect against humanity. It was in the light of the failure of the government counter terrorism drive that made youths in the North- East part of the country to form a youth anti-terrorism movement called "Civilian JTF" to complement the effort of the government counter terrorism strategy.

According to Alozieuwa (2012) as cited by Anyadike (2013) and also Oladayo Nathaniel Awojobi (2015) "the challenge posed by Boko Haram in Nigeria is not only about the viciousness of either its terror campaigns or the sect's avowed mission to impose Islamic law on the country, but about the confusion regarding the exact cause(s) of the violence". A lot of factors have been attributed to the cause of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria such as socioeconomic, political and religious factors. However, Awojobi (2014) and Onuoha (2014) posit that the high-rate of poverty in Nigeria has made the youths enlisted in the ranks of Boko Haram foot

soldiers which have elongate the conflict since 2009. Most of the activities of the sect are concentrated in the North-East of Nigeria. Despite the state of emergency that was declared by the Federal government, the killings, bombings and kidnappings of Boko Haram continue unabated. The activities of Boko Haram sect have led to economic, social and psychological implications in the North-East of Nigeria where the sect has a strong presence.

2. Conceptualization of the term Boko Haram

Is a branch of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. It has been active in Nigeria since 2002 and launched its terror campaign in 2009. The name of the group means "Western" or "non-Islamic" education is a sin. The group is active in the north of Nigeria, and wants to impose Islamic law as the only law in Nigeria. It also wants to outlaw education that is not based on Islam in the country. The group sees itself as similar to the Taliban, which are active in Afghanistan. Locally, the group is known as the "Taliban". The official name of the group is *Jama'atu Ahlis Sunna Lidda'awati wal-Jihad*, which in Arabic means "People Committed to the Propagation of the Prophet's Teachings and Jihad." They also call themselves 'Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP)'.

Local residents of the area soon called the group Boko Haram. Loosely translated from the local Hausa language, this means Western education is forbidden. Residents gave it the name because of its strong opposition to Western education, which it sees as corrupting Muslims. The term "Boko Haram" comes from the Hausa word '*Boko*' meaning "Animist, western or otherwise non-Islamic education" and the Arabic word '*Haram*' figuratively meaning "sin" (literally, forbidden).

3. An Historical Overview of Boko Haram in Nigeria

Boko Haram insurgency is not the first major group attacks or militancy attacks that have faced the Nigerian state. Different sects or groups had arisen in Nigeria with little or real militancy approach in prosecuting their different objectives. Amongst them were: the Maitatsine Islamic fundamentalist sect in North-east and North-west Nigeria, Odua People's Congress (OPC) from the Yoruba ethnicity in South-west Nigeria, Bakassi Boys and Movement for the Actualization of Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB) from the Igbo ethnic group in South-east Nigeria and the Niger Delta militants from the minority ethnicities in South-south Nigeria. The activities of Boko Haram pre-dates 2011 general elections, because there are the generations of people that have been engaging in different political, religious and ethnically-motivated crises in Northern part of Nigeria (Aro, 2013).

It is on record that Boko Haram has been operating under the name Shabaab Muslim Youth Organization with Malam Lawal as the leader since 1995 but leadership of the group shifted to Malam Mohammed Yusuf when Malam Lawal left Nigeria to continue his education in Saudi Arabia (Ekanem and Ejue, 2012). It is the leadership of Malam Mohammed Yusuf that allegedly opened the group to political influence and popularity. By implication, therefore, Malam Mohammed Yusuf is the one that officially founded Boko Haram in 2002 in the city of Maiduguri with the aim of establishing Sharia government in Borno and neighbouring states (Gilbert, 2014). Boko Haram's principal goal was to create a strict Islamic state in the north that it believes would address the ills of society, including corruption and bad governance. The sects core beliefs are strict adherence to the Quran and the Hadith (sayings of Prophet Muhammed Sallahu Alaihi Sallam), and their interpretation as sanctioned by Ibn Taymiyyah. Abu Qaqa, the group's best known spokesman, explained that

the group's agenda is to destabilize Nigeria and take her back to the pre-colonial period when the Sharia law was practiced (CGAR, 2014). In the early stages, the Boko Haram sect was widely known to have mobilized its membership from women and children, school dropouts and unemployed University and Polytechnic graduates, most of who tore their certificates. The rationalization is that unemployment, underdevelopment and the general hopelessness pervading the society was caused by government which imposed western education on them and failed to manage the resources of the country to their benefits. Therefore, "western education is sin"; and this is the literal interpretation of Boko Haram in Hausa Language (Gilbert, 2014: 151). Although from the outset the sect's mission was to impose Sharia on Nigeria, the leadership went about its preaching and interpretation of the Quran as a recipe for violence and an affront to constituted authority (Anyadike, 2013)

Serious concerns over its violent tendencies grew only after the death of Yusuf while in police custody, as well as his father in-law and sect financier, Ustaz Buji Foi, and the imprisonment of members by state authorities. It is relevant to note that Yusuf adopted a non-violent approach in his campaign but hoped to achieve his objectives through constant preaching in Mosque and forming alliances with politicians especially Sherrif Lawal. It cannot be ruled out that there were attacks during the leadership of Yusuf but most of the attacks were mild compared to the well-coordinated virulent terroristic attacks after his death.

Although Yusuf purportedly drew encouragement from radical Islamist, he reportedly resisted some of his follower's relentless campaign for the outright rejection of secularism and the use of violence as the major instrumentality for the achievement of their objective. Against this backdrop, BBC online, June 22, 2012,

opined that the sect's current level of radicalization and terrorism is perhaps, a function of the death of its initial leadership and the subsequent clampdown by the state of the taciturn psychopath, Abubakar Shekau a Kanuri native who once boasted "I enjoy killing any one that Allah commands me to kill-the way I enjoy killing chickens and rams". Gilbert (2014: 152) posited that the new leadership turned to the use of lethal weapons such as: rocket propelled grenades (RPGs), anti-tank missiles, Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), surface-to-air missiles, armoured tanks, A-K 47 assault rifles, as well as machetes and daggers for the purpose of meting out their target.

4. Some Major Attacks by Boko Haram in Nigeria

Since the gradual manifestation of the Boko Haram sect into a terrorist group in Nigeria, the country has witnessed unbelievable loss of lives and properties that have attracted the attention of the international community. Apart from the Nigerian civil war of 1967-1970, Nigeria has never had it so bloody. The country is on a daily basis bathed with the blood of innocent citizens through either bomb blast or exchange of gun fires between Boko Haram and the Nigerian army. It is on this premise that this work examines Boko Haram attacks and how these attacks have caused economic backwardness in Nigeria.

According to Agomuo (2011) for a while, the sect targeted serving and retired military and other security personnel, perhaps to avenge the blood of Yusuf their leader who was allegedly killed in 2009 by some policemen. Since they started their operations, members of the sect have assassinated a number of high profile Islamic scholars in Maiduguri and like Afghanistan Talibans, the group has also attacked many drinking and eating rendezvous where they dispatched hundreds of souls to their early graves. Clashes with security agents in 2009 escalated in July into a full

scale armed insurrection targeting police headquarters, stations and officers homes in a failed attempt to establish an Islamic state in Maiduguri and some cities in the north including Bauchi, Potiskum and Kano. And a brutal military crackdown led to the death of over 800 Boko Haram members (CGAR, 2014).

After the 2009 crackdown, Boko Haram became disorganized and went underground for a year before re- surfacing in 2010 as a full-blown terrorist group, with attacks on police, their stations and military barracks to avenge the supposed killings of Yusuf and other comrades. Furthermore, the group carried out jailbreaks to free members and demanded prosecution of Yusuf killers, release of detained colleagues, restoration of its destroyed mosque and compensation for members killed by troops. Originally directed mainly at security forces and government officials, the campaign was expanded to include attacks on traditional rulers, suspected collaborators against the sect, UN agencies, bars, schools and innocent commuters (Daily trust, 3 March, 2014). From a local Nigerian group, it gradually evolved into a terrorist group with international connections with similar groups in Africa and beyond (Gilbert, 2014: 152-154). And its modus operandi has equally grown in scope, savagery and sophistication. On Christmas Eve 2010 as many as half a dozen bombs were detonated near churches and markets in two districts of Jos, Plateau state killing scores of people. On New Year eve of 2010 a bomb was detonated in a popular open-air fish restaurant and market inside the grounds of the Mogadishu barracks, just outside Abuja killing ten people (Anyadike, 2013). According to Walker (2012) as cited by Anyadike (2013), during the first few months of 2011, the group's targets for assassination operations in Maiduguri widened beyond the original focus of police and other authorities. In February 2011, a pharmacist in Maiduguri not believed to have had any previous connection to the group's treatment by the police

was murdered and large amount of cash and medical supplies were taken from his shop. Since money and other commodities were required for its operations, the Boko Haram group began to rob banks, cash-in-transit convoys, and successful businesses, not only in Maiduguri but also in Bauchi. These monies amounting to about 500 million naira were tagged spoils of war by the Boko Haram group with reference to the Quran. In June 2011, Boko Haram bombed the National police headquarters in Abuja; a car laden with explosives drove into the compound of Louis Edet house, a block of offices and was detonated killing dozens of people. In August 2011 a man drove a car into the UN compound in Abuja and detonated a massive bomb, killing twenty-three people and wounding scores of other persons (Anyadike, 2013; Bekoe, 2011). Boko Haram also spread its campaign in 2011 to churches. That year's deadliest bombing was a Christmas Eve attack against St. Theresa Catholic Church in Madalla, outside Abuja, in which over 40 worshippers were killed and dozens injured (CGAR, 2014).

According to Anyadike (2013) big attacks have included bombings on Christmas day in 2011, when bombs were detonated in three states, Niger, Plateau and Yobe, killing 45 people. In January 2012, three groups of gunmen and suicide bombers coordinated attacks on three government buildings in Kano - the police headquarters, the office of the immigration service and the state security service. More than two hundred people were killed. In February 2012, a bomb blast hit St. Finbar's church Rayfield in Jos near the Government house and 19 people were killed. Others include: office of This Day newspaper in Abuja and Kaduna, the Catholic chapel in Bayero University, Kano and a cattle market in Yobe state killing dozens of people.

From the abovementioned, it is clear that Boko Haram insurgency has unleashed several attacks on Nigeria rendering many lives and properties destroyed. Nigeria is gradually being negatively transformed into Afghanistan and other deadly terrorist's countries of the world where people wake up every day to witness and hear news of terrorist's attacks.

5. Boko Haram and Nigeria's Socio-economic Development

Nigeria is a country that is grappling with issue of development ever since its independence to date. The country is rated among the developing nations of the world with recent score card of being the fastest growing economy in Africa. Additionally, Nigeria is a country with low per capital income, high unemployment rate, low human capital development, poor income, infrastructural decay and many other developmental challenges. Nevertheless, since 1999 the civilian administration has been making frantic efforts to revamp the economy and increase infrastructural and human capital development. The present administration of President Muhammadu Buhari in the midst of stiff opposition by political opponents and terrorist groups is making headway in Airports re- modelling, university repositioning, agriculture, commerce and industry, railway reorganization and upgrade, seaports and roads rehabilitation and reconstruction, and employment generation. On the contrary, the activities of Boko Haram insurgency have been a major catalyst of underdevelopment in Nigeria, especially in the northern part of the country.

Education is a panacea for national development across the world. There is no society that does not give adequate attention to its educational growth and development. Apart from the paltry budgetary allocation by the government, the Boko Haram insurgency has been an obstacle to educational development in

Nigeria. By implication, Boko Haram translates to war against western education especially in northern Nigeria. In Borno State the attacks had destroyed over 882 classrooms as of August 2013, in Yobe state all schools were shot from June to September 2013. On 6 March 2014, the federal government closed five Federal Colleges (Unity Schools) in Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States, ordering their estimated 10,000 students to relocate to other schools (Daily Trust, 10 March 2014). Parents fearing attacks have withdrawn thousands of children from schools in a region already the most educationally backward in the country.

In a country that is struggling with educational infrastructure and qualitative manpower to improve on the standard and quality of education, the Boko Haram insurgency is further compounding its challenges through attacks on the few available schools, kidnapping of school girls, killing of students and teachers. Certainly, this is affecting adversely the present and future economic progress of this country. It will further increase the rate of illiteracy in the society; for it is an educated and enlightened mind that steers the ship of development. When the rate of illiteracy and school dropout is high, there is the tendency that violence will increase and persist in Nigeria. The country in the near future will run short of required manpower and informed citizenry to pilot her affairs especially in Northern Nigeria. This in turn will increase tension and further polarize the nation especially, with regards to fulfilling the federal character principle enshrined in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution.

Economically, the Boko Haram insurgency has immensely contributed to the economic backwardness of our country that is attempting to reposition her economy to meet the 21st century economic challenges and overcome poverty. Poverty rate is

very alarming in Nigeria, but in recent years especially in northern Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency has doubled the poverty rate.

According to Aro (2013) the economic effects of insurgency in Nigeria can be generally viewed from two perspectives: they are the effects on the state (Nigeria) and individual members of the state (Nigerians) particularly, residents of Bauchi, Borno, Yobe, Plateau and neighbouring northern states. Economic activities have been massively disrupted; the insurgents destroyed more than 25 telecommunication masts and base stations in Maiduguri, Potiskum, Bauchi, Gombe and Kano states, thus setting back efforts to improve telecommunications in the region (The Guardian, 12 September 2012). Isakpa (2011) in his view on the negative impact of Boko Haram insurgency on the economy opined that “there can be no real progress made in any economy that is hostage to security”

Aro (2013:2) was quick to assert that; Boko Haram insurgency has not only led to closure or abandonment of peoples business activities within the affected region but also led to immigration of people from the affected region as well as led to reduction of patronage of products from northern region because of rumour that Boko Haram strategists are planning to send poisonous products to other parts of the country. Also, the insurgency of Boko Haram has reduced drastically government developmental projects, investment and growth in private business initiatives in the affected places. No wonder 2011 world investment report of the United Nations Conference on Trade Development reported that lull in business activities caused by insecurity in Kano alone has cost the Nigerian economy N1.3 trillion (6 billion dollars) as a result of attacks by Boko Haram group (Aro, 2011).

Furthermore, Boko Haram insurgency has discouraged Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Nigeria. Investors all over the world are afraid of coming to do business in Nigeria. Countries on daily basis warn their citizens to stay off Nigeria. This is a very bad signal to economic growth and development. Nigeria with its vision 20:20:20 is projected to be world economic power by 2020, but with the Boko Haram insurgency, the economic future of Nigeria is bleak. With the discussed deleterious effects of this insurgency on the Nigerian economy and the huge resources being deployed by the Federal Government to fight Boko Haram, the development of Nigeria is at stake. Apart from the economic impact of Boko Haram insurgency in Nigeria, the country is also experiencing serious setbacks at the political level of governance. The Boko Haram insurgency to a large extent has paralyzed government institutions and has also created an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust among the political class, which is not healthy for our nascent democracy. Furthermore, it has hindered government performance in North- East geopolitical zone of Nigeria in particular and the country in general. The activities of Boko Haram have finely tuned serious qualms among the Nigerian general population, especially in those intense states. The trend has led to loss of lives and property. Business ventures and shops have remained closed. Boko Haram has succeeded in instilling fear and hatred among the people who have been living in peace and harmony for decades

6. Conclusion

This study had an objective to explore the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on the economic development of Nigeria especially in north eastern part of the country. No doubt the activities of Boko Haram has destabilised the economic status of the country. Security challenges cannot be addressed without all stakeholders

collaborating to put an end to it. Nigerians must put away ethnic sentiments and tackle the Boko Haram insurgency with strength and determination. It is only through the united force of Nigerians and Nigeria alone that Boko Haram insurgency and other security and national issues can be addressed.

7. Recommendations

1. The government should keep trying to reduce the level of poverty among Nigerians by creating more employment opportunities especially for the youth in order to minimize issues of unemployment in the country.
2. Government should take religious issues as serious matter. For any religious conflict government should allow scholars in collaboration with government official to treat the conflict in a dialogue and diplomatic approach.
3. Sponsors and sources of funding for the Boko Haram insurgency should be traced. The best way to defeat a man in a battle is to cripple his economy. All Boko Haram sponsors and sources of funding should be brought to book and crippled.
4. The government should match words with action in dealing with the security challenges in Nigeria. This should include equipping the military, re-organizing the police force, settlement of political, economic and religious disputes without favouritism.

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